

OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD

STRATEGIC PLAN 2003-2005

PREFACE

Consistent with Seattle City Council's mandate, the Office of Professional Accountability (OPA) Review Board fully embraces the notion that meaningful citizen input is an essential component of police accountability. As Seattle's first civilian oversight board, the Board seeks to provide an independent perspective on the effectiveness of OPA, the internal agency charged with responsibility for reviewing complaints against employees of the Seattle Police Department. One year into its work to design and implement an ongoing evaluation system for OPA, the Board now presents its Strategic Plan to ensure thorough and fair investigation of police misconduct complaints. The Board's ultimate goal: enhanced relations among law enforcement and all Seattle communities.

The central thrust of our mandate is to bring about oversight that is independent of law enforcement yet responsive to the general public's concerns through an open, accessible and deliberative forum. We carry out this mission in the main by selectively reviewing closed OPA cases to test the effectiveness of complaint review procedures. We are refining case review criteria to promote OPA **integrity** (How thorough and fair is the process to all participants?), **legitimacy** (How is the process perceived by complainants, named officers, the community at large, the Seattle Police Department, and elected officials?), and **consistency** of outcomes (what is OPA's ultimate impact on police accountability?).

No police accountability system can work if it lacks public support. This is an especial concern in Seattle where our OPA is still relatively new. While we are fortunate to have a very well-trained and equipped Seattle Police Department, much work remains to build the requisite trust and confidence in the OPA on the part of both civilians and rank and file police officers. This Strategic Plan tells how the Board intends to help build such public support for OPA.

Citizen oversight, as represented by the work of this Board, is but one component of any good police accountability system. Our elected officials, from the Mayor to City Council, the SPD, as well as our community leaders, must all work together to make police accountability a top priority. It is in this spirit that your OPA Review Board presents this first Strategic Plan outlining goals and methods for the immediate years ahead. We sincerely hope that our work will be useful to those who follow after us in this endeavor.

- I. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT AN ONGOING EVALUATION PROCESS TO MONITOR AND REPORT ON THE OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY (OPA) SYSTEM, MEASURING THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS AND COORDINATION OF OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES AMONG THE OPA DIRECTOR, OPA AUDITOR, AND OPA REVIEW BOARD

Planned Actions:

1. Determine consistency of application and effectiveness of OPA Investigations Section (IS-OPA) standards and procedures with the current Seattle Police Department (SPD) policies and procedures.
 - Review and monitor the current OPA complaint classification system;
 - Review ten percent (10%) of all closed cases each month;
 - Review all sustained cases each month, noting interactions with the OPA Auditor and the potential impact of early intervention systems;
 - Establish regular monthly meetings with the OPA Director and the OPA Auditor. Collaboratively explore the overlap among Review Board, IS-OPA Director and Auditor functions.
2. Routinely monitor, review and make recommendations on IS-OPA standards and procedures based upon feedback from complainants, officers, witnesses and other interested parties; review best practices from the academic literature and other jurisdictions.

- II. INCREASE GENERAL AWARENESS OF AND CONFIDENCE IN THE OPA COMPLAINT AND COMMENDATION SYSTEM

Planned Actions:

1. Evaluate and make recommendations on the semi-annual reports of the OPA Director with special attention to trends, patterns and impact.
2. Explore ways to work with the OPA Director to define and measure increases in civilian and law enforcement confidence in the use of the complaint system.
3. Hold annual public information hearings in collaboration with core stakeholders to provide information and receive input from the community regarding critical police accountability issues.
4. Explore with the Seattle Police Officers Guild, Seattle Police Management Association, and SPD Command Staff the feasibility of hosting annual law enforcement forums.

- III. FOSTER BETTER COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN CIVILIANS AND POLICE ON EMERGING ISSUES, INCLUDING, BUT WITHOUT LIMITATION:

- Use of force
- Racial profiling
- Community perceptions vs. police actions
- Minority community issues

Planned Actions:

1. Analyze number and disposition of minority community complaints filed with the OPA for consistency with established SPD policies and procedures.
 2. Assess adequacy of OPA follow up with complainants.
 3. Review and publicize all commendations and recognitions received by and awarded to SPD officers.
- IV. MAKE INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CITY TO ENHANCE PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT, ADDRESSING SUCH TOPICS AS:
- Training
 - Use of force
 - Civility (e.g., use of officer name tags)
 - Early intervention system(s)

Planned Actions:

1. Continue to participate in special and regular SPD training opportunities.
 2. Continue to participate in patrol ride alongs and precinct roll calls.
 3. Identify sustained or exonerated cases alleging improper use of force and corresponding use of force packets; undertake comprehensive analysis of best practices and community perceptions regarding use of force.
 4. Work with core stakeholders to identify the police accountability issues perceived as critical to their constituencies.
- V. EVALUATE ANNUALLY THE OPA REVIEW BOARD'S PERFORMANCE IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE MEASURABLE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

Planned Actions:

1. Issue two semi annual reports to City Council;
 - a. Interim (6 months)
 - b. Final (12 months)
2. Provide in the Final Report a set of conclusions and recommendations summarizing the year's work, including an annual review of past recommendations, identifying which ones have been accepted, implemented their effectiveness.
3. Meet with City Council and other city entities to discuss the OPA Review Boards semiannual reports and assess Board success in fulfilling its mission, consistent with the Seattle Municipal Code.
4. Hold an open meeting no less than once a year to invite public feedback and comment on OPA Review Board performance.